



Alexander J. Guittarr
Died in the line of duty on December 30, 1940

Description of Act

Alexander J. Guittarr, of 20 Sayward Street, died early Monday morning on December 30, 1940 as a result of gas inhaled while fighting a fire a few hours earlier on Sunday evening. The fire was in Bass Rocks on Souther Road, the summer home of Francis A. Brewer of Brookline. The fire apparently started on a porch, burned up a shingled side, through walls, and raged furiously in partitions. Once inside the house, firefighters noticed a particular odor which they identified as gas.

Captain Alex O. Hanley, a Gloucester Electric Company supervisor, began searching and eventually located and forced a bulkhead in the basement, which released a wave of gas fumes. He located a * SNIP * in the gas line to a house heater and turned it off. Firefighters labored through intensely punishing smoke and fumes to open various holes in the partitions, to reach and extinguish the incipient fires. Captain O. Hanley later succeeded in reaching the gas meter and found that the line was turned off at that location.

Firefighter Guittarr, known as "Sandy", drove Hose 1 back to the fire station, backed the kit into its stall, removed his helmet and rubber coat, and proceeded to clean up and load the wagon when he was stricken with severe pains in his head and arms. He retained consciousness and wanted to walk, but Motor Supervisor Guy Wagner and firefighter Lawrence S. Landry insisted that he be carried upstairs to bed.

Dr. Morris H. Pett promptly answered an emergency call and the inhalator and oxygen were brought from the police station and were immediately administered (the Fire Department's equipment being still at the fire). Guittarr was rushed to the Addison Gilbert Hospital where Dr. David Cohen did everything possible for him. Guittarr rallied briefly and spoke, but soon died.

In addition to Guittarr's fatal exposure, seven other firefighters were seriously affected by the gas fumes. Most seriously affected were firefighters Frank W. Stockbridge and Edmond B. Marble, and a "spark", Ralph Francis, son of Captain and Mrs. Louis A. Francis. The other four were Elliott O'Hearn, Maurice T. Dench, Roland Wise, and Chester T. Wonson.

Background

Alexander J. Guittarr was born in this city on April 7, 1895, son of Mr. and Mrs. John S. Guittarr. He married Evangeline Cooney, who survived him with three sons; Alexander J. Jr., Roy G., and Ronald E. He also left two brothers, William Guittarr of East Boston and Boston Police Officer Charles Guittarr and three sisters; Burtha, wife of Benjamin Rogers of Gloucester; Margaret, wife of Melville Morris of Roslindale; and Mrs. Sadie Ingersoll of East Boston. Sandy Guittarr was a good firefighter and a zealous worker who commanded the respect of all who knew him. Sandy first joined the Fire Department in May 1924.

Postscript

As his remains were lowered into the grave, the all out signal, two blows, were sounded on the fire alarm.